

HEREDITARY INFLUENCE OF
HABIT 121

Industrious than our forefathers ? Could we answer these questions in the affirmative we might open before our eyes a vista of limitless progress. But experience affords little foundation for so encouraging a dream.

In respect to directive instinct we have perhaps some grounds for believing that habit may amplify the capabilities of this faculty by grafting new processes upon it. We have seen that it is impossible to attribute to experience many of its subtler and more complicated workings. But some instinctive processes such as the turning round of the door. plainly appear to have been generated by habit. The possibility of this is, however, strenuously denied by an influential school of biologists, who maintain that instinct cannot be affected by experience. and owes its multiform complexities to variations that occur in the reproductive cells of parents. quite independently of any new shifts to which they may have been put in obtaining their livelihood. Many of the practices which appear to be habits have so to speak. crystallized into instinct. are. it is alleged. not innate but are learnt by imitation of parents or companions. Imitation no doubt accounts for more than may readily be supposed. especially in the behaviour of gregarious creatures. It seems that the fear with which wild birds regard man is not inborn but is caught from their parents : it may

be imitation that leads the house-marten to build its nest under the eaves of house-roofs. displaying what appears to be an instinct that has been acquired since man began to build houses. But imitation will not account for the predilection of the mud-wasp (*Pelopoeus*) for chimney-corners as sites for its nest: it lives a solitary life: it will build its nest in other places, and, so far as experiment can